

Here is a HORSE and harneſs too,
Which ev'ry little boy may win,
If they will ſtrive to learn their books,
And afterwards prove honeſt men.

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1796



See Page 5.

THE

HISTORY

OF

Mr. Sylvanus Ashfield,

who was born

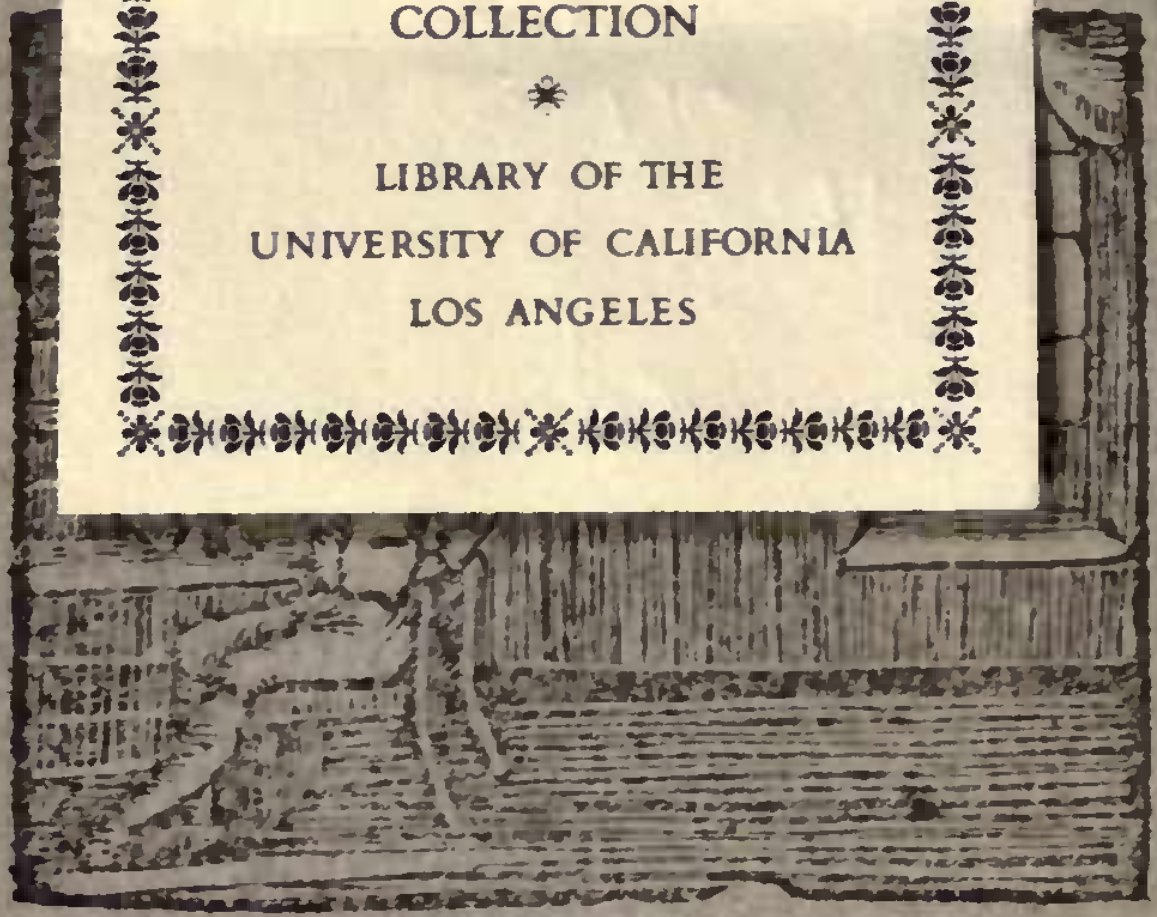
in the County of

DURHAM.

London:
Printed in the Year, 1796.

CHILDREN'S BOOK
COLLECTION

LIBRARY OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
LOS ANGELES



See Page 5.

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THE STORY OF

M. Sylvanus Aſhfield.

MR. Sylvanus Aſhfield was born in the county of Durham; at the age of twenty-one he became poſſeſſed of an eaſy fortune, and thought immediately of ſettling in the world. He married a lady of equal rank and fortune with himſelf, by whom he was bleſſed with three children; he was extreemly fond of his little offſpring, and whenever they were aſſembled around his knees, he thought himſelf happier than a king. He had a good

library, and when he was not with his wife and children, his time was ſpent in ſtudy. Tho' he had a general taſte for all ſorts of books, his inclination chiefly directed him to the poets, and particularly thoſe of the dramatic kind. He had a ſtrong paſſion for Shakeſpear's tragedies; he read them over and over without ceaſing; and, ſometimes, he thought how happy the people in LONDON muſt be, who had opportunities of going to the play-houſes, where there theſe excellent pieces were exhibited. This notion, which occurred frequently to his mind, grew up to a moſt violent deſire. He might indeed have taken a journey to LONDON, as no body could have hindered him; but whenever he conſidered the matter

ſeriouſly, reaſon oppoſed ſo abſurd an excurſion; and he was conſcious, that all his friends would blame him for taking a journey of 200 miles, merely for the ſake of ſeeing a play. He continued two whole years in this diſtracted condition, and became melancholy and penſive.

Juſt at this time, however, he received a letter from town, with an account that an aunt of his was dead, who had appointed him her ſole executor. It was therefore become abſolutely neceſſary that he ſhould go up to LONDON, to ſettle her affairs. All his friends were ſurpriſed at the joy he expreſſed on hearing this news, as he always had been eſteemed a diſintereſted perſon.

He was really uneasy that they began to think him covetous, but he could not bring himself to declare the true cause of his satisfaction. A French author observes very judiciously, that we are more jealous of the opinion others form of our understanding, than we are with respect to what they think of our morals; and we chuse rather to be thought immoral than ridiculous, or of a weak capacity: at least then he acted upon his principle.

He immediately ordered his horse out,



and left all the world at liberty to think as they pleased, as his whole care was in hastening every thing for his departure. He scarce allowed Mrs. Ashfield time to put up a few shirts in a cloak-bag; and tho' he had the tenderest love for his family, the tears they shed when he rode off, were by him totally disregarded; his mind was wholly agitated by the pleasures he hoped to find in

ſeeing a play. He rode on very quick ſcarce allowing himſelf time for refreſhment. When he alighted at the Inn, the firſt queſtion he aſked was, 'at what o'clock they opened the play-houſe.' and he was anſwered, about five. As the time drew nearer his impatience increaſed. When he came to the play-houſe door, it was exactly four o'clock. He was enraged at the porter, and believed he delayed opening the door for the purpoſe. However it was ſet open at laſt, and in our hero ruſhed. He ſurveyed with eagerneſs the place he had ſo long and ſo often wiſhed to ſee; and at laſt ſeated himſelf. Mean while the company crowded in, and ſeemed to ſhare with him in impatienee: ſome by bawling,

others by thumping their ſticks upon the floor, and ſome by whiſtling. At laſt the long wiſh'd-for moment comes, the curtain is drawn up, and,—What do you think?—A man of enormous bulk comes in, and ſeats himſelf juſt before our hero, and almoſt obſtructed a ſight of the ſtage. This inconvenience, however, he remedied by leaning on one ſide, till his back was almoſt broken. The actors at laſt appeared, and for a time he ſeemed to have loſt his faculties.

He only came to himſelf again at the cloſe of the firſt act. He then began to conſider the pleaſure he had received by this novelty: it was really great, but far from anſwering his expectations.

This disappointment occasioned a disgust; however, he was still determined to examine the play, and to remark its defects; so, that at last, he found fault with the author, the players, the decorations, and even thought that every particular fell short of that perfection to which it might have been carried, to make the whole complete.

The farce, which was a pantomime, was still more disagreeable, being in itself extremely indecent and immoral. The exhibition was at last was at an end, and he returned to the inn very pensive and discontented. While he was in this melancholy mood, he made the following pertinent reflections:

—My case, said he to himself, is very

common. A young lady at fourteen or fifteen, hears of what I may call the GRAND PLAY, or, COMEDY OF THE WORLD; she longs to be seen at this public spectacle, and endeavours to hasten the long-desired hour; at length she appears at assemblies. What forecast, what care is had to be in a proper place to see and be seen in a manner the most likely to sooth and flatter her vanity! But when she fancies she has succeeded, and that she is fixed to content, in comes a taller person, that is, a lady of greater beauty, a finer shape, more wit, and possessed of talents which she wants; she seizes and fixes the eye of every one in the company, and eclipses the young person that thought herself so happy, and who, in order to

catch a ſide glance, and have ſhare in the admiration of the ſpectators, is forced to be on the rack, and in the moſt uneaſy poſture, where this dangerous rival ſhines with ſuperior endowments. Though the conſtraint is greatly troubleſome, ſhe keeps up her heart, and bears her preſent ſituation, with the proſpect of the pleaſure ſhe hopes to find in this meeting. How great is her ſurpriſe, and how affecting her concern to ſee, that the pleaſure does not anſwer her expectation! ſhe is fruſtrated, ſhe does not meet with half, no, not a quarter of the ſatisfaction, ſhe propoſed to herſelf; ſhe grieves, ſhe begins to loath the world, that requires ſo much, and returns ſo little; but this diſguſt too often fails

of bringing a love retreat, and ends in being out of temper with the faults of the play and the performers; that is, the incidents of life: the perfidiouſneſs of indifferent perſons, and the ingratitude of thoſe who were thought friends. One is deceived on all ſides, obliged to take a ſhare in the trouble of this perſon, and to ſuffer the unjuſt proceedings of that other; this is not all; this Comedy, or Univerſal Pantomime, which is not very entertaining, is very ſcandalous: what is heard and what is ſeen, diſpoſes generally to evil. Who has the holy fear of the Lord, dreads being ſullied with this filth; he muſt be ever on his guard, always reſiſting, and engaged in an endleſs ſtruggle. Here the eyes and the ears

muſt be conſtantly ſhut; the tongue muſt be almoſt under a perpetual reſtraint. What a pity! in fine, the play draws to an end, night, that is old age, comes on. What remains, but very little pleaſure, great uneaſineſs, unprofitable deſires and tormenting remorſes? Happy thoſe, who, like myſelf diſguſted with the firſt repreſentation, take a handſome reſolution and follow my example,

FINIS.



See thro' the ſtream how round the
bait,
The wanton FISHES friſk about ;
But when enſnar'd, the angler draws
The poor deluded captive out.